



**90% OF OFFENDERS HAVE
AT LEAST ONE MENTAL
HEALTH DISORDER**

(ONS 1997)

WELCOME TO YOUR MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS COURSE

SO WHY IS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS IMPORTANT?

FOR YOU THIS COURSE CAN HELP TO:

- *Enhance your existing management and observational skills*
- *Increase your understanding of mental health issues*
- *Enable appropriate earlier intervention*
- *Make you more effective in your vital role*

THIS COURSE WILL SUPPORT YOU TO HELP OFFENDERS:

- *Cope better with life generally*
- *Cope better with the issues that can result from being within the prison environment*

INTRODUCTION

Mental health is an area of health that is important to us all. It is crucial to our ability to lead a fulfilling life:

“THERE IS NO HEALTH WITHOUT MENTAL HEALTH”

Life can be described as a continuum that we all move along - Our mental health is better at some times than others. People with mental illnesses tend to move along the continuum more.

WHAT ARE THE AIMS OF THIS COURSE?

- To increase understanding of mental health issues.
- To contribute to your professional development.
- To complement other training, especially the ACCT course.
- To recognise the environmental pressures faced by prisoners.
- To allow you to respond effectively to a range of situations.
- To provide practical advice to prisoners in distress.
- To improve the quality of life of offenders.
- To enable you to manage offenders who are experiencing distress – and distinguish between the ‘worried well’ and those who have enduring diagnosed mental illnesses.
- To act as a reference source for you in the future.
- To make a contribution towards a more safely managed environment.
- To make a contribution towards a reduction in reoffending upon release.



HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

- Remember that this can be used as your reference – you can take it away with you to aid your personal development.
- This booklet accompanies a presentation that will be made by your trainer.
- At the front of the workbook is a table of contents so you can quickly find what you need. The separate modules are colour coded for your convenience e.g. Personality Disorders are green.
- Along with general information we also provide handy hints and tips (shown by the light bulb) along with interesting facts.
- At the back of the workbook is a glossary of terms and appendices for extra information.
- It's hoped that you will be able to apply the knowledge within this workbook and that you will reflect upon it in the future.

There won't be time to cover all the material in this booklet.

Your trainer will go through with you the most relevant sections for your situation – it is a 'pick and mix' presentation.

However you have all of the training material so you can look through it later.

EXERCISE

Mental health in the prison environment brings its own difficulties - both for staff and offenders.

0.1 What do you do to maintain or improve your mental health?

0.2 Contrast what you do with what opportunities are open to offenders to do the same...

SO WHAT IS POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH?

One commentator, D.W.Winnicott, wrote that: *“Health is more difficult to deal with than illness”*. Why might this be the case?

POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH IS ABOUT:

- Feeling in control
- Being able to make rational decisions
- Being in touch with our feelings
- Being able to form positive relationships
- Feeling good about ourselves
- Knowing how to look after ourselves

POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH CAN BE ACHIEVED IF INDIVIDUALS:

- Talk about their feelings
- Write things down
- Keep active
- Eat well
- Sleep well
- Keep in touch with friends and loved ones
- Get knowledge and take control
- Get professional help
- Improve coping skills
- Set realistic goals
- Keep an eye on personal stress
- Find a hobby
- Ask for help

McDonald and O'Hara (1998) identified 'Ten elements of mental health promotion and demotion' - i.e. factors that can help or hinder positive mental health:

MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION	MENTAL HEALTH DEMOTION
self-esteem	emotional abuse
emotional processing	emotional negligence
self-management skills	stress
environmental quality	environmental deprivation
social participation	social exclusion

SO WHAT IS MENTAL ILLNESS?

It may impact on the way a person thinks, behaves and interacts with other people.

Mental illness (or mental distress) is an umbrella term that refers to various psychiatric disorders. Just like physical illnesses they can vary significantly in severity and in the symptoms you may see.

Many people suffering from mental distress may not look as though they are ill while others may appear to be confused, agitated, or withdrawn.

Not too long ago mentally ill people were 'warehoused' in public institutions because they were disruptive or feared to be harmful to themselves or others. Today most people who suffer from a mental illness-including those that can be extremely debilitating such as Schizophrenia - can be treated effectively and lead full lives.

“THERE IS NO HEALTH WITHOUT MENTAL HEALTH”

It is a myth that mental distress is a weakness in character and that offenders can get better simply by “pulling themselves together”

Anyone can have times when they are mentally distressed – in fact it is thought that 1 in 4 of the general population will have a mental health problem at some point in their life.

However, there are particular stressors for offenders – physical isolation, social isolation, lack of purpose, guilt etc

Mental illnesses are real illnesses, as real as heart disease and cancer. They need and can respond well to treatment. As prison staff you can employ your observational skills to play a vital role in recognising mental distress.

In the past 20 years especially, psychiatric research has made great strides forward in the precise diagnosis and successful treatment of many mental illnesses.

SO WHAT AFFECTS OUR MENTAL HEALTH?

Mental health is determined by many complex and related reasons all of which can interact to determine the state of our mental health. There are many theories and different factors that enable us to positively maintain our mental health:



- Family, friends, colleagues
- Employment
- Education
- Stable housing
- Sound finances
- Faith and religion
- Social activities - hobbies and interests
- Exercise and nutrition
- Cultural diversity



- Positive and optimistic thought patterns
- The ability to cope with stressful life events
- A sense of control over our lives
- Emotional support from family, friends etc



- This is what occurs naturally, within our brains, over which we have no control
- Mental Illness often occurs when various brain chemicals do not work effectively, working too much - or not at all.

Which of the above are not available to offenders to maintain their mental health?

THE MENTAL HEALTH CONTINUUM: *Everyone's mental health constantly fluctuates and moves up and down the continuum to varying degrees.*

Where are you on the continuum at the moment?

POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH



MENTAL DISTRESS

SO WHAT IS MENTAL ILLNESS NOT?

There is a lot of stigma surrounding mental health...

SCHIZOPHRENIA IS NOT...

- Split or multiple personalities - that is actually known as Dissociative Personality Disorder
- A guarantee that the offender will be violent or dangerous
- Always a diagnosis for life

BIPOLAR DISORDER IS NOT...

- An indication that a person constantly swings from highs to lows (mania to depression)
- A guarantee that the mood swings last the same length of time, follow the same pattern or even that they occur regularly. It varies enormously from individual to individual
- Always a diagnosis for life

BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER IS NOT...

- A sign of a faulty personality
- A guarantee that the offender is manipulative or displays attention seeking behaviour
- Untreatable

ANTI SOCIAL PERSONALITY DISORDER IS NOT...

- Diagnosable through standard Mental Health assessments

DEPRESSION IS NOT...

- Easy to recover from without professional help, support and treatments
- The same as mild 'low moods' that all of us can experience regularly as a result of daily events
- A guarantee that someone will express suicidal thoughts

Many people who suffer mental distress can fully recover and go on to lead fulfilling lives.

GENERALISED ANXIETY DISORDER IS NOT...

- The same as phobias, fears, stress or panic attacks
- Untreatable
- A guarantee that someone will then develop other illnesses e.g. Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and Eating Disorders



*Did you know that there are different types of **Depression**?*

MAJOR OR CLINICAL DEPRESSION

Individuals seem disinterested in becoming involved in regular activities. The offender feels that they will always be in this hopeless state. Loss of appetite and weight loss are the norm.

ATYPICAL DEPRESSION

Atypical depression is different from Major Depression. The offender is sometimes able to experience happiness and moments of elation. Symptoms include fatigue, over sleeping, over-eating and gaining weight. Episodes can last for months, or the offender may live with it forever.

PSYCHOTIC DEPRESSION

Offenders tend to see and hear imaginary things and sounds, voices and visuals that do not exist. They are called hallucinations – where the offender imagines negative and frightening sounds and images.

REACTIVE DEPRESSION

This depression has more to do with severity of life stresses than inherited factors. Symptoms are typified by worry and anxiety, with problems getting to sleep rather than waking early in the morning.

SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER

A type of depressive disorder which is characterised by episodes of major depression which reoccur at specific times of the year – especially in Autumn & Winter.

POSTNATAL DEPRESSION

Can emerge for the mother at any time in the infants first year. Common symptoms are feeling very low and despondent, that life is a long grey tunnel and that there is no hope. Most sufferers complain of feeling tired and lethargic, or even quite numb. There can often be severe guilt about not coping or not loving the baby enough, or even being hostile or indifferent to their baby.

DOCTORS ALSO DEFINE DEPRESSION BY HOW SERIOUS IT IS:

MILD:

Some impact on daily life

MODERATE:

Significant impact on daily life

SEVERE:

Daily activities are almost impossible



Listeners, health trainers and all staff throughout the prison can play a part in mental health promotion to offenders.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

In common with other public authorities, staff working with offenders should strive to extend the concept of equality to all of the following areas:

- Culture - particular days and times of days that may be of particular importance
- Interpersonal communication
- Discrimination
- Faith
- Equality and diversity
- The presumption of mental health
- Language and general communication

The benefits of promoting equality and embracing diversity are to:

- To remove any unfairness and disadvantage in service provision (institutional discrimination)
- To harness the knowledge and experience of stakeholders to make processes transparent and inform decision making
- It is quicker, simpler & cheaper to build disability equality into a projects design from the start
- Improves the chances of success and the



INTERNAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Please add details to the table below that are relevant to you...

TITLE:	NAME:
Health Care Contact	
ACCT Assessors	
In Reach Team	
Chaplain	
C.A.R.A.T's team	
Suicide Prevention Co-ordinator	

USEFUL EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

Mental Health can be a fascinating and rewarding subject to learn more about. It can make your job safer and easier as well as improving the lives of offenders.

Department of Health
www.dh.gov.uk

Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health
www.scmh.org.uk

Care Services Improvement Partnership
www.csip.org.uk

Raise Mental Health Ltd
www.raise.org.uk

MIND (Mental Health Charity)
www.mind.org.uk/

Offender Health
www.dh.gov.uk/en/Healthcare/Offenderhealth